



# INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE, INC.

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## Reasons For the President to Address

### The International Rescue Committee

### Fiftieth Anniversary Dinner:

While the International Rescue Committee presently and in recent years has, of necessity, assisted overwhelmingly hundreds of thousands of refugees who have fled Communist terror, (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Poland, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Angola) from the very beginning IRC was formed to assist those fleeing any totalitarian terror. Since the origins of the IRC were during a period when virtually all who were fleeing terror were from fascist countries, especially Nazi Germany, this fact will add dimension to the President's advocacy of democracy, and antipathy to the major totalitarianisms of the right, as well as the left. The IRC was formed within weeks of Hitler's assumption of total power in 1933, at the initiative of Albert Einstein and Reinhold Neibuhr in the United States.

While others were paralyzed or helpless, the IRC operated an underground escape route from Marsailles in 1940 and 1941, as the Gestapo was seeking all those who had fled from the European countries Hitler had already occupied. In ones and twos IRC personnel, at great individual risk, took them across the Pyrenees on foot, out of France into Spain, then on to Portugal and the United States. The 2000 who were saved in this manner include the leading writers, scientists, artists, democratic political leaders who have since then enriched Western civilization, some of them making a major contribution to the U.S. war effort after Pearl Harbor.

The IRC played a major role in Budapest during the Hungarian revolution. I was the first American to visit with Cardinal Mindszenty, within three hours of his release after seven years in prison.

Bill Casey and I made a similar effort to reach Prague during the 1968 Soviet occupation of that country. We were not fortunate on that occasion, and were surrounded by Russian tanks before we reached our objective.

One of the most unfair criticisms made of the President is the absence of compassion. The President's participation on this occasion will be a powerful antedote.

The three co-chairmen of that dinner were each political refugees from fascism. One of the three was both in Nazi concentration camps and Communist imprisonment as well. [redacted]

[redacted] The President's westminster speech did not receive the attention we all wish it had. This occasion provides an opportunity to both put flesh on that purpose and restate the President's convictions expressed in that speech.

Few people know how deeply the President feels about political refugees. It is of singular importance that he devoted his radio Christmas address to one of the most eloquent identifications with those refugees anyone has ever heard. It has never received the attention it should have. I am enclosing a copy of that address.

The IRC is the lead agency functioning in Thailand, assisting precisely the people he talked about.

Few people realize that in assisting those who flee from terror, more than 90% of those who are helped and given hope do not seek resettlement to the United States. If they're helped at all, they're helped in the country of first asylum. The American people, who have been so generous in providing resettlement opportunities, deserve to know that fact, and no one better to emphasize it than the President.

I was told that when the first group of Amer-Asian children arrived in Washington several months ago, the President was deeply moved, and instructed staff to do everything to help. The child who received the most attention in the Washington press was resettled by the IRC, which plays a continuing role in this reuniting of children with their fathers who were servicemen during the Vietnam war.

No nation has expressed the abhorrence toward what has been happening in Afghanistan that the United States has. No agency has done more to assist many of the 3 million Afghan refugees along the Pakistan border. This program, you should know, is the particular creation of [redacted] who [redacted] went to that border two years ago, to initiate it. [redacted] involvement in the IRC began during the period of the Hungarian revolution in 1956. Mine began during the late 1930's, intensified when the U.S. made an unsuccessful effort, after the war, to prevent the repatriation of Russian prisoners of war back to the Soviet Union. I have been chairman since 1951.

Perhaps the closing point ought to emphasize that the nature of the occasion will be such that the leaders of American industry, labor, community, charitable and civic affairs will crowd that ballroom that evening.



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